

UK sets course to hit Top 20

President outlines plans for research

LEXINGTON, Ky. (AP) — University of Kentucky President Lee Todd shared his plan Monday to transform the state's flagship school into a Top 20 public research institution by 2020.

The proposal calls for enrollment growth of 7,000 undergraduates, more faculty with higher salaries, a near tripling of research grants and millions of dollars in construction. In all, it would double UK's current \$1 billion budget.

The school also would ask for increased state funding of between \$15 million and \$23 million a year, totaling \$260 million through 2020.

"Let there be no doubt: The University of Kentucky intends to become a Top 20 public research university by 2020," Todd said during a campus forum. "We will continue to work toward this goal because Kentucky's economic success demands it, and the people of Kentucky deserve it."

UK officials have been talking about Top 20 status since 1998, after it became a state mandate as a part of the Higher Education Reform Act. The "Top 20" status refers to rankings by U.S. News and World Report of U.S. colleges and universities. While schools and their exact positions on the list may vary from year to year, some, such as the University of Michigan and the University of Maryland, are permanent fixtures on the list.

Todd plans to pitch his plan to UK's board of trustees at a Dec. 13 meeting. If the board approves it, then the school would try to convince legislators to approve the first budget request.

However, the Top 20 plan won't be stopped by a lack of state funding, UK officials said. If the state doesn't increase funding, tuition could increase significantly. But the plan notes that if the state funding is provided, tuition increases can be held under 10 percent between now and 2012 and would decline to less than 5 percent as 2020 approaches.

When the university reaches its goal, the investment will pay statewide dividends, Todd said.

"We know Top 20 universities go hand in hand with more educated and healthier populations," he said. "Average household incomes are higher, ... unemployment rates are lower and fewer public dollars are spent on health care."

Under the plan, enrollment would rise to 34,000 students; 625 new faculty members would be added, giving the university more than 2,500; the graduation rate would increase by 12 percent to 72 percent; and research expenditures would increase from \$470 million to \$768 million.

William "Brit" Kirwan, chancellor
See UK, A7

UK (Continued from Page A5)

cellor of the University of Maryland system, says his state's economy has been propelled by research at the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins University.

"What's required is a university that can attract talent and can produce highly skilled graduates to drive the economy," said Kirwan, a UK alumnus. "Those areas (of the country) that are booming are really those clustered around major research universities."

Todd estimated that if Medicaid enrollment shrinks to the same

level as in states with Top 20 universities, Kentucky would spend \$850 million less a year.

Jeffrey Dembo, the faculty representative on the UK board of trustees, thinks the plan lays out a clear path for the first time.

"The deeper question is whether the citizens of Kentucky ... think a better educated populace will lead to less incarceration, better health, better economic development potential ... and, overall, a higher standard of living for the citizens."